



***THE FLOWER THAT  
BROKE THROUGH  
THE RUBBLE:***

**THE LEGACY OF  
SAYYED HASSAN  
NASRALLAH**

*‘The illegitimate son [‘israel’]  
of the illegitimate amerika,  
whose own history involves  
the massacre of millions of  
Natives, has me choose between  
humiliation and the sword—  
and I choose the sword.’*

by  
Julia Kassem

As he stated: 'The illegitimate son [‘israel’] of the illegitimate amerika, whose own history involves the massacre of millions of Natives, has me choose between humiliation and the sword—and I choose the sword' (Nasrallah 2024b).

Continuing his work undeterred, he was eventually martyred by 80 u.s. Mark-84 bunker buster bombs dropped on six apartment complexes in Haret Hreik, Beirut's southern suburbs. Amidst Netanyahu's impending trials, corruption scandals, a widened row between him and Gallant, and the collapse of 'israel's' war cabinet, the zionist entity sought to solve its own crisis in leadership through the decapitation strikes against Hezbollah's own. The loss of his gravity and vision regionally and nationally were a heavy blow whose ripple effects were felt within Hezbollah and manifested in the fall of the Assad government in Syria. Nonetheless, organizational mechanisms put in place by Sayyed Nasrallah over the last 30 years, ideologically, spiritually, and institutionally, ensured that a loss in leaders did not mean a loss in leadership.

Published in *Middle East Critique* April 24, 2025  
[tandfonline.com/journals/ccri20](https://tandfonline.com/journals/ccri20)

Cover: A poster of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut, Lebanon,  
August 23, 2006

Palestine, directly hitting ‘israeli’ army installations in occupied Lebanese territory and later moving to desecuritize the Lebanese-occupied Palestinian armistice line, when ‘israel’ attacked Lebanon in return. For nearly a year, Hezbollah emptied the northern settlements of occupied Palestine, eventually extending the range of fire to Tel Aviv. ‘israel’ exhausted its capabilities, deploying two-thirds of its forces and resources to the north, as control over its northernmost settlements and Tel Aviv was being challenged. Though Nasrallah delicately balanced protecting Lebanon with depleting ‘israel’s’ capabilities through a war of attrition on its northern front, this balance was broken when Netanyahu, whose war cabinet was crumbling and who was in constant quarrels with his Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, intentionally framed Hezbollah for the Majdal Shams incident. This incident became the justification for a wide-scale campaign of civilian destruction and devastation against Hezbollah, opting for decapitation strikes against its leadership after inflicting a wide-scale terror operation through the explosion of personal pagers. Sayyed Nasrallah constantly drew back on u.s. imperialism as the primary contradiction in Lebanon’s own national question, the Palestinian question, and the region’s occupation. In his approach to politics and in his speeches, he dealt with the u.s. and ‘israel’ on a dialectical and historical basis, drawing on their shared history of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and imperialism.

When we learn the history of this entity called the u.s., built on oppressive foundations, we know how to deal with it. The u.s. is a country of settlements. Horrible massacres perpetrated against Natives, hundreds of millions killed in genocides of men, women and children. If someone bets on a relationship with the u.s., chumming up to the u.s., setting up Arab lobbies in the u.s. we can get Palestinian and Arab rights, this person is wrong ... because you can’t divide between the u.s. and ‘israel’ and the nature of their entities and their essence. (Nasrallah 2020)

On September 27, 2024, the u.s. and ‘israel’ detonated 80 tons of amerikan Mark-II multi-ton bunker-buster bombs over the southern Beirut suburb neighborhood of Haret Hreik, assassinating Hezbollah chief, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. Few contemporary Arab leaders had the political impact and leverage that Nasrallah had, having been the central focus of u.s. and ‘israeli’ counter-insurgency for decades. At the same time, he was also a critical figure to the consolidation of the regional Resistance Axis, and an icon for both Islamic resistance and anti-imperialist liberation globally. This essay aims to reflect on the legacy of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the martyred leader of the Lebanese resistance organization, Hezbollah, by analyzing the trajectory of his political formation and ideology, as well as the spiritual and material elements of his activity and successes. While delving into the impacts of his lifelong struggle and leadership, this work also briefly touches upon the impact of his martyrdom, while providing a dialectical—both material and spiritual—assessment of his legacy.

The roots of Shia resistance can be traced back to the eighteenth century, specifically to South Lebanon and the figure of Sheikh Nasif al-Nassar al-Amili al-Wa’ili, who allied with Sheikh Zahir al-Umar in Palestine to resist Ottoman rule that was denying the Shia their sociopolitical agency. The Ottomans used to repress them harshly, burning their books and literature. As such, Palestinians and Shia Lebanese have shared a long historical trajectory of shared anti-colonial resistance. This shared history traces back to the occupation of Palestine in 1948, the Zionist-‘israeli’ occupation of seven southern Lebanese villages, and the ensuing massacres in Hula, a small village in South Lebanon, between October 31 and November 1, 1948. The Shia of today’s



South Lebanon have long suffered under foreign control, first under the feudal Ottoman control and the French colonial era, and latterly due to the crosshairs of 'israeli' incursions and u.s. counter-insurgency operations.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire gave way for European colonialism to assume its place. The French sought to establish a hold on Lebanon as the Ottoman feudal order made way for the French-instituted sectarian society (Kadri 2014). In South Lebanon, revolutionaries like Adham Khanjar, Sultan al-Atrash al-Faour, and Mahmoud Ahmad Bazzi took up arms against the French occupation. Their revolt followed calls during the April 24, 1920 Wadi al-Hujair conference to establish sovereignty for Jabal Amel as part of Arab Syria. The leader of the conference, Sayyed Abdul Hussein Sharaffedine al-Musawi, called for national Christian-Muslim unity against the French occupation:

Deprive the usurper of his opportunity with composure, and extinguish sedition with beautiful patience, for by God, one party does not incite another party except to stir up sectarian sedition and ignite civil war until, when his claim is true and his dream is realized, he settles in the country under the pretext of protecting minorities. Beware, the Christians are your brothers in God, in the homeland, and in destiny. So, love for them what you love for yourselves, and protect their lives and money as you protect your lives and money, and in this way, you will thwart the conspiracy, extinguish the sedition, and implement the teachings of your religion and the Sunnah of your Prophet. (Sayyed Sharaffedine 1920)

This sparked a trajectory of resistance figures and events. Fifty years later, in 1957, Sayyed Musa al-Sadr, a stellar social and religious scholar and a distant relative of Sharaffedine, would return to Lebanon after having studied religious law in Qum, Iran. Al-Sadr became Sheikh Sharaffedine's successor. Revered by the

Hezbollah's fighting capacity.

Against the backdrop of these internal disputes was Hezbollah's confrontation with 'israel' over the decade-plus border demarcation issue. Lebanon had laid claim to gas riches from the Qana and Karish fields for years, as 'israel' sought to take Lebanon's share, despite international legal-based claims backing Lebanon's rightful claim (Aoudé 2019). The haste for the u.s. to broker a deal intensified around October 2021, as Lebanon plunged into a u.s.-engineered financial crisis, and, supported by a 2020 Lebanese military study, claimed an additional 1,430km<sup>2</sup> (Line 29) as part of its maritime territory. Washington was fomenting alternative export sources for gas to Europe with the plan to isolate Russia economically from Europe coming to fruition months later. The goals for the u.s. and 'israel' were twofold: first, to maximize their territorial claims into the Qana Line 23 gas field; and second, to renege on Beirut's original claims to Line 23. Hezbollah sent drones and surveyed 'israel's' offshore rigs—attempting to begin extraction before demarcation took place—alongside Sayyed Nasrallah's strong threats against extracting 'before Lebanon had secured its rights' (Nasrallah 2022). By October 22, 2021, Lebanon restored its full claim to the Qana gas field, delineated the maritime boundary, and was able to kick off exploration. Despite the limitations in operating within the Lebanese state, the efforts of Hezbollah were crucial in achieving this result. Hezbollah operated by averting direct participation in negotiations, which would have signaled normalization, while applying deterrent pressure on 'israel.' At the same time, Palestinian resistance groups also took inspiration from Sayyed Nasrallah by issuing threats against 'israeli'–Egyptian–PA joint offshore extraction off the Gaza coast.

The Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023 shattered the trajectory of Arab state normalization. While Hezbollah was initially caught by surprise, it was also the first to enter the fold in support of

Additionally, Sayyed Nasrallah facilitated a popular culture of self-sufficiency, advocating for planting and agricultural initiatives, distribution of agricultural aid and seeds, the mobilization of health, low-cost loans and payment plans for solar power systems, opening subsidized supermarkets, such as Al-Sajjad, and helping subsidize low-cost items in the community supermarkets. His emphasis on gaining opportunities out of crisis inspired resilient community action and mobilization, while also calling for a decoupling from Western finance capital and emphasizing the currency collapse as a harbinger for the decline of u.s. economic hegemony (Nasrallah 2019). Though limited by the lack of consensus in the heavily Western-backed Lebanese state, Nasrallah broke the siege on Lebanon by importing Iranian fuel in September 2021 and confronted additional u.s. attempts to incite civil war in Lebanon by implicating Hezbollah in the port blast in 2020.

The u.s. Ambassador Victoria Nuland met with u.s.-backed civil society members, NGO leaders and Judge Bitar (Al-Akhbar October 2021), providing training and instructions on mobilizing against Hezbollah and Amal in the Beirut port explosion case. The u.s. also launched a sanction campaign on selected Amal leaders under the pretext of corruption charges related to the disaster a month prior (u.s. Department of the Treasury 2020). The ‘Shiite duo’ found itself at the brink of civil war, when the Western-backed Lebanese militias led by fascist Samir Geagea opened fire on peacefully demonstrating Hezbollah and Amal supporters who were protesting against the sham trial. Nasrallah, in a speech following the Tayouneh massacre incident, delivered his message to the amerikans although the speech seemed to be addressed—at face value—to the Lebanese forces. He warned them against miscalculations, reminding his opponents (and their internal agents) that Hezbollah possesses over 100,000 fighters. This was both a reminder to Samir Geagea not to instigate civil war, as well as a deeper message to the u.s. on the extent of

disenfranchised Shiite population and earning a prominent place of respect among Lebanon’s other sects and ruling parties, Al-Sadr navigated a socially divided Lebanon at the brink of civil war. He focused heavily on fostering inter-religious and inter-sectarian unity, a praxis and principle that Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, a devout admirer and follower of Al-Sadr, would champion decades later. From Al-Sadr, Nasrallah would also inherit the drive and diligence to join the Amal resistance movement and seek to create an organized military arm to enhance his political vision. Al-Sadr would benefit from and influence the Palestinian resistance movements—mainly the PLO—that found in Lebanon both home and haven in the 1970s. At that time, Nasrallah was about 16 years old, and he joined Al-Sadr’s movement, rising quickly in its ranks to become a leader of one of the local chapters before he was presented with the opportunity to go to Iraq and study in Najaf under the guardianship and mentoring of Sayyed Abbas al-Musawi, a Lebanese religious scholar and teacher, who would later become Secretary General of Hezbollah. Upon the assassination of Al-Musawi, Nasrallah rose to prominence and later became Secretary General, taking the party in new directions and turning it into one of the most powerful resistance movements in history.

Nasrallah’s Hezbollah produced a multifaceted social movement that, at its foundation, was ingrained in Imam Khomeini’s post-revolutionary path. While the Islamic Republic in Iran inspired and supported this movement, it was also harmonized with reason and rationality instilled by his historical and clerical predecessors in Lebanon. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah took lessons in practice from his spiritual guide in Lebanon, Sayyed Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, with his strictly principled pragmatism. Sayyed Fadlallah heralded doctrine as not being one of ‘words, appearances or rituals, but rather a belief in the *aql* (rational mind), a movement for life, and a solid stance in situations and challenges’ (Fadlallah 1992) equipped with equal parts ‘theory and practice.’ Sayyed Nasrallah ratified Fadlallah’s practical reconciliation of politics,



society, and religion that viewed the applied practice of political action and international relations through a religious framework. He inherited from Fadlallah a rejection of modernist dichotomies between practice and theory while consolidating revolutionary power through ‘the logic of the state’ (Baroudi 2013). Fadlallah was concerned with the ‘logic of power’ as a practical application for Muslims exercising a religious duty in struggling against oppression and colonialism, recognizing building power and combating weaknesses as an imperative to resist and operate from a position of strength. In this process, secular nationalist and leftist movements were considered allies, as long as these political ideologies worked together in the struggle against imperialism and for Palestinian liberation (Baroudi 2013, 113; Saouli 2019; Fadlallah, 2000). In this regard, Sayyed Nasrallah elevated these principles with an exemplary leadership, where unwavering faith was subordinated to an astute, strategic mind—abiding by Fadlallah’s instructions to conduct affairs out of reason, not emotion (Fadlallah 1992).

Nasrallah led Lebanon into liberation, being the first leader to hit inside ‘Israeli’ settlements in occupied Palestine and setting a new balance of power in 1993 and 1996, following a succession of post–World War II Global South liberation movements in depriving large, imperialist armies of their ability to wage war (Mack 1975). This victory, which Khamenei in 2000 hailed as ‘a small force vanquishing an army by the will of Allah Almighty,’ shared these doctrinal (2:249) as well as historical dimensions. The extent of Nasrallah’s devotion can be clearly chronicled throughout his whole life of applied struggle. He began his history by taking part in the resistance under Amal prior to 1978 and then under Hezbollah after 1982. He became a field representative for the movement in the Bekaa and was later appointed to the head of Hezbollah’s Executive Council in 1985 after serving on the Shura Council. He was chosen as the leader of the resistance movement in 1992 when his predecessor, Sayyed Abbas al-

support base and to achieve the long-held demand of disarming the resistance group (Kadri 2019). Western institutional elements in Lebanon harnessed Western-funded media, NGOs, and discursive narratives in the protest sphere to campaign for Hezbollah’s political isolation, while pushing demands for a Blackrock-owned technocracy. Next door, Caesar Act sanctions, coupled with the continued occupation of northeast gas and agricultural fields, forced Syria, historically the regional beacon of self-sufficiency and the headquarters for Arab liberation movements (Higgins 2023), into dependency and dollarization (Aita 2020).

Amid the years of the u.s.’s intensified hybrid war campaign, Nasrallah was the only leading political figure in Lebanon advocating for structural changes to delink from the anti-developmental and capitalist-driven u.s.-oriented economy. He supported the revival, and to some extent nationalization, of the productive agricultural and industrial forces within Lebanon. He advocated swapping debt-trapping predatory IMF bailouts, mechanisms for austerity and regressive wealth transfers, for Chinese infrastructural investments, Russian power plants, and Iranian gas to buttress the energy needs squeezed by u.s.-led currency manipulation and sanctions. Under Sayyed Nasrallah’s directive, Hezbollah equipped several hospitals to assist with the healthcare challenges, and imported low-cost substitutes of Iranian products and medicines to help cope with the rising costs and structural shortage of these items. Due to the currency collapse, massive hoarding took place by standard Lebanese importers that refused to sell these items at lower prices, allowing critical medicines, healthcare supplies, and baby formula to expire in warehouses. Hezbollah’s banking system and employees of social institutions were relatively less affected by the economic crisis due to the organization’s self-sufficient operation outside the traditional Lebanese banking and finance system.

Middle East—the so-called ‘Pivot to Asia’—was marked by a proliferation of counter-insurgent groups to destabilize Syria, tested through the toppling of governments during the ‘Arab Spring.’ Despite widespread regional popularity after the 2000 and 2006 victories, Sayyed Nasrallah, at the onset of the post-2011 war on Syria, became subject to a Qatari-led, Western-backed propaganda campaign maligning Hezbollah’s defense of Syria as sectarian-motivated or propping up a brutal dictator. These discourses, fanning regional sectarian flames, obscured what the Hezbollah Secretary General was defending—that is, a neighboring Arab state historically serving as a support front to anti-colonial resistance, bridging Hezbollah with Iran, thus forming a geographical axis decoupled from u.s. imperialism. Sayyed Nasrallah blasted the Obama administration, which, along with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, ‘created ISIS’ (2016). He sarcastically thanked Donald Trump for ‘exposing the true face of racist, criminal, bloodthirsty America ... when an idiot resides in the White House and openly flaunts his foolishness, it marks the beginning of relief for the oppressed around the world’ (Nasrallah 2018). His scathing jabs at u.s. leaders and officials—shattering the image of u.s. exceptionalism held by many Lebanese—exposed its ruling class’s crisis of power (Lenin 1917) domestically and in West Asia, enfeebling the image of the u.s. to his constituency.

The Trump-era sanctions-oriented regional campaign heavily affected Lebanon, triggering a years-long u.s.-led currency crisis that culminated with the first slip to the artificially inflated Lebanese lira in 23 years. This was followed by the 2019 Caesar Act sanctions on Syria, deeply exacerbating the crises in both countries (Aita 2020). Banks closed their doors, locking deposits inside, while massive capital flight fomented the social unrest. There was a widespread rapid descent into poverty, and a further social crisis erupted due to problems with distribution of fuel and medicine, intended to put popular pressure on Hezbollah’s

Musawi, along with his wife and baby son, were martyred when an ‘israeli’ helicopter opened fire on their convoy.

To Sayyed Nasrallah, martyrdom marked the beginning—not the end—of new stages in resistance. It represented a divine goal rather than an existential setback. In the aftermath of the martyrdom of Sayyed Abbas al-Musawi, a pious and strong leader, mentor and teacher to Nasrallah during their years in Najaf, and who helped later build the military resistance as well as some of the institutional framework and sociopolitical and religious vision for Hezbollah, Sayyed Nasrallah vowed to ‘complete this path, even if they kill us all, even if we are all martyred, even if our homes are destroyed over our heads, we will not abandon the option of Islamic resistance’ (Nasrallah, 1992). For instance, the martyrdom of his eldest son, Hadi, in 1997 elevated his resolve and leadership further, providing him with the momentum to lead the liberation of South Lebanon in 2000. In a post-liberation meeting with the resistance’s executive council, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei (Khamenei 2024), hailed this divine victory: ‘With Sayyed’s [Nasrallah’s] planning, Hezbollah grew step by step, patiently, logically, and naturally ... [showing] the effect of its existence to enemies in different stages: “It gives its fruit every season by the leave of its Lord”’ (Quran 14:25).

Through the lens of the Lebanese Islamic Resistance’s victory over ‘israel’ in 2000, the successes of this ideological and historical lineage, brought to fruition after Khomeini’s revolution, were actualized by Sayyed Nasrallah in modern times. His victory marked the first time an Arab and Muslim group forced ‘israel’ to a major territorial retreat since 1973, setting the course for many regional victories to come.

The divine victory—as it was known—inspired region-wide pride to Arabs who long internalized defeats. The equation between



‘israel’ and the forces of the Resistance Axis<sup>1</sup> was shifted, and ‘israel’s’ projection of strength and invincibility was put into question. A 33-day siege on Lebanon in 2006 aiming to eliminate the Lebanese resistance movement failed. Sayyed Nasrallah’s feats alone were exemplary of his reputed boldness, including a TV-broadcast surprise announcement of the destruction of an ‘israeli’ warship by Hezbollah. ‘israeli’ tanks piled up as scrap metal, ambushed and trapped in the hills of Wadi Hujeir, cementing the hilly valley’s resistance history 86 years after it held the first convening of anti-colonial resistance. After 2006, Nasrallah led Hezbollah to challenge ‘israeli’ air superiority, building up to notable use of hidden air defense systems and downings of ‘israeli’ Hermes drones in post–Al-Aqsa Flood battles (Al Mayadeen English 2024).

In 2009, Hezbollah published a new manifesto that outlined a new vision for the Resistance group, situating its activities in the Lebanese sociopolitical context, as well as the global arena. Nasrallah was instrumental in ushering in a ‘retreat of [u.s.] unipolar hegemony to the interest of multipolarity’ (Alagha 2011) caused by u.s. military retreats regionally and accelerated by the collapse of u.s. financial markets. The manifesto, grounded in its core Islamic foundation, expressed solidarity with ‘liberation that rejects hegemony,’ with special appreciation and solidarity given to Latin america and its shared experience, regional struggle around a ‘humane identity, and a common political and moral background.’ The new Hezbollah manifesto was a direct reflection of Nasrallah’s pragmatism and understanding of the Lebanese Islamic Resistance group’s struggle as bridging solidarity across international dimensions, articulated through a Fanon-like slogan of ‘unity of the wretched’ (Alagha 2011). This aligned with his

1 The Resistance Axis is a term widely used to refer to a military coalition including state actors—Iran and formerly Syria—and paramilitary resistance forces in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Palestine allied with Iran against u.s. and ‘israeli’ hegemony and occupation.

Nasrallah led the force protecting Christians from Takfiri-backed extermination and stabilized the Syrian nation against a NATO-backed destabilization campaign. The aftermath of the Syrian conflict signaled a rejection of the Western political consensus, led by Hezbollah, and represented Nasrallah’s stance in protecting sovereign pluralistic unity, both regionally and nationally. Nasrallah helped strengthen the Palestinian cause in reconciling differences between Syria and Hamas, which emerged during the ‘civil’ war, and uphold the focus on Palestine and against u.s. occupation in his community and among his communication and coordination channels with other arms of the Resistance Axis.

As the ‘hot war’ phase in Syria died down, later giving way to crushing sanctions and military occupation of the agricultural, oil, and water-rich north, the war on Yemen was passing its turning point in favor of the Yemeni resistance. Through these events, Sayyed Nasrallah positioned himself as not only the Secretary General of Hezbollah, but a major visionary and coordinator of the whole Axis. From the onset of the u.s.-backed, Saudi-led war on Yemen in March 2015, leader of Yemen’s Ansarallah Movement Abdel Malik al-Houthi and Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah exchanged words of solidarity and support, reaffirming and even coordinating Yemen’s focus on the Nasrallah-led regional project against u.s. domination and imperialism. Hezbollah gave much in technical assistance and military training to the Ansarallah Movement, with the late commanders Badderedine (martyred in 2016) and Ibrahim Aqil (martyred in a September 2024 drone strike on his apartment) playing a foundational role in cementing the Ansarallah–Hezbollah shared struggle on the ground. By 2019, having reached victories against Saudi Arabia and struck deep into critical insights and infrastructure, they were ready to coordinate their resistance efforts against ‘israel,’ the fruits of which we are seeing today.

The Obama- and Clinton-era strategy for foreign policy in the



working through contradictions; rather, it became a set of global external conditions that determined the willingness to bet on success. Material factors operated as the auxiliary component to the spirit, with Sayyed Nasrallah actualizing this dynamic as a shrewd, analytical political leader who mastered political pragmatism with the guidance of deeply religious convictions. By tapping into Jabal Amel's ideological historical memory, Nasrallah equipped Hezbollah with ideological self-sufficiency, also from a material perspective.<sup>4</sup> On this note, a famous Palestinian popular commentator Nizar Banat, killed by the Palestinian Authority in 2021, also highlighted the 'better command Islamists have over dialectical materialism'<sup>5</sup> compared to historical secular forces.

Nasrallah constantly stressed 'israel,' Daesh, the Lebanese Forces far-right militia, and the Gulf states as mere tools of u.s. imperialism. It would be shocking to some that Sayyed Nasrallah, the leader of the ultra-religious Hezbollah movement, was perhaps one of the few leaders to dispel 'the myth of the israeli lobby' as an excuse for 'the Arabs to establish relations with, park their money in [u.s.] coffers, and not fight amerika' (Nasrallah 2024a).

Unsurprisingly, Sayyed Nasrallah was the subject of several u.s.-led counter-insurgency campaigns designed to isolate Hezbollah's role in government on a political level, and to isolate Syria from the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance factions.

---

4 Khamenei and Fadlallah stressed the importance of ideological and material self-sufficiency in defiance to internalized notions of Arab or Muslim inherent inferiority. This doctrine is manifested in Iran via developmentalist 'resistance economy' and in the domestic engineering of weapons by Hezbollah, which was assisted by late IRGC General Qassem Soleimani.

5 For an understanding of the intellectual stature of Nizar Banat, please see his YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/@nizarbanat9370>.

discursive and practical approach of uplifting the Khomeinist concept of *mostazafin* (downtrodden) in an ethical struggle against the *mostakbarin*<sup>2</sup> (oppressors). Moreover, fundamental to such struggle was resistance to occupation as the basis of Hezbollah's struggle and formation (Alagha 2011; Nasrallah 2016), though religion established the fundamental and foundational context, milieu, and framework for the organization of struggle. Whether in Gaza or in Lebanon, what drove the emergence of resistance organizations was the necessity to respond to the material realities of occupation and counter-insurgency (Omar 2024).

The post-Taif<sup>3</sup> age institutionalized a new manifestation of neoliberal neo-colonialism built on the foundations of the confessional order implemented by the French in 1920. In the neoliberal age, u.s. hegemony and Saudi regional sub-imperialism eclipsed the old colonial order and reconfigured France's role, relegating it to a supporting power of the West tasked primarily with the containment of Syria's influence in Lebanese institutions. While the Taif agreement formally worked to eliminate sectarianism by reconfiguring the balance of power, the division of sectarian and partisan power—and thus state assets—fostered the conditions for a permanent, yet frozen, civil war atmosphere (Kadri 2014). In such a context, Hezbollah worked to situate itself within the contradictions of this body politic, orienting its alliances towards sovereign goals. Nasrallah first led the resistance group toward a path of integration in a national unity framework in 1992, with Hezbollah's first participation in parliamentary

---

2 *Moustazafin* and *mostakbarin* are Qur'anic terms used by Khomeini and Shariati in writings and speeches finding salience amidst contemporary colonial and class-based struggles in Iran, West Asia, and Afrika, yet they are not derived from Marxism.

3 The Taif agreement, brokered in 1989 by Saudi Arabia, redistributed the sectarian balance of power from Christian to increasing Muslim representation—a reflection of both changing demographics and the shift in capital, whose orbit changed from France to the Gulf.

elections. In February 2006, months before the ‘israeli’-led and u.s.-backed war on Lebanon, Nasrallah signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Free Patriotic Movement, the largest Christian political party in Lebanon, led by the patriotic Lebanese General Michel Aoun. The MoU provided clear plans and roadmaps for a shared commitment to state-building, continued support for resistance and liberation efforts of Lebanese land and prisoners from ‘israeli’ prisons, and ensured reconciliation of the Free Patriotic Movement’s relationship with Syria. Nasrallah’s establishment of a political coalition in Lebanon aimed at moving past the sectarian-fueled, civil war atmosphere by fostering alliances around principles of Lebanese sovereignty while fighting back attempts at inciting sedition and capitulation of Lebanon towards a pro-‘israel’ and u.s. consensus. In the spirit of Fadlallah’s pluralistic vision, Hezbollah’s allies and supporters ranged from pan-Arabists, Syrian Ba’athists, Greater Syrian Nationalists, anti-imperialist Islamists, and Christians, all united in the struggle against the ‘israeli’ occupation, nationally and regionally. While guided by religion, Sayyed Nasrallah understood that ‘the enemy does not target us on a religious basis, but for anyone opposed to zionism and having a culture of Resistance’ (2016).

## Rhetoric and Rationale

Sayyed Nasrallah’s broad appeal was solidified through his charismatic oratory skills. Possessing an eloquent command of Arabic, he would begin each speech by honoring a martyr or an Islamic commemoration, thus opening up with religious themes before moving to political analysis. His speeches would then end with a firm declaration of resistance in the context of the events discussed, weaving historical and present political analysis with philosophical and epistemological undertones. Revered for his honesty, despite his strong and thunderous rhetoric, he

Hezbollah party platform, which slammed the kafala system as a new ‘form of slavery’ and proposed a national public transportation line (2018). Nasrallah led the only political force in Lebanon openly challenging u.s. imperialism, as well as its manifestations of racial capitalism within the economic dynamics of the country. Against the backdrop of a historically structural relationship between the extractive and developmentally regressive u.s.-led neoliberal policies and comprador classes in Lebanon, with the post-2019 economic crisis, Sayyed Nasrallah openly advocated a closer partnership with Russia and China in building infrastructure in the country (Nasrallah 2019; 2023). He correctly stated that the u.s.’s top foreign policy priority was preventing a China–Russia–Iran alliance; the group’s 2009 manifesto identified the dialectic relationship between u.s. defeats in West Asia and the rise of multipolarity.

## Resisting Counter-Insurgency

Nasrallah not only countered ‘israeli’ aggression, but also led the only force in Lebanon resisting the u.s. hegemonic political project, acting as the regional bulwark against a regional ‘New Middle East’ project. Even the leadership of the PLO, an organization that studied the works of Mao, Marx, Lenin, and Guevara (Abdo 2014), did not heed Mao’s lesson of ‘primary contradiction’ as Nasrallah did. Arafat, who established clandestine channels with the u.s. in hopes of leveraging their power to counter ‘israel’s,’ is now reputed for the Oslo-era capitulation to u.s. demands at the expense of the Palestinian cause. The fate of many Arab communists and leftists resulted from misappropriation of materialism. External structural factors, such as the fall of the Soviet Union, coincided with the fall of the Arab left, who lost their state-sponsored base of institutional and ideological support. The application of historical materialism was short on analyzing strategy, accurately assessing capabilities, and patiently



sectarian-motivated method of consolidating in-group support, a consensual means of projecting hegemonic power within a neoliberal framework (Daher 2016) and even an intermediary medium for the manipulation of state ministries (Khatib 2021). However, these institutions, noted for their superior efficiency, organization, and service (Cammatt 2014), present themselves as a model for the gutted institutions of the Lebanese rentier state. Educational and social institutions and programs politically educated and socialized the Shia base amidst the wildly anarchic 1980s and hypercapitalist consumerism of the post-1990s, safeguarding the investment in human capital systemically wasted under constant warfare (Kadri 2023), comprador control over infrastructure and services, and a service-sector and real-estate-oriented economy that sidelined development and productive labor.

In contrast to the advancement of capitalism that brought normalization with ‘israel’ (Ajl 2024) and surrendered to u.s. economic and political diktats, Sayyed Nasrallah articulated a vision for reinvigorating the productive forces nationally, opposing IMF neoliberal policies in Lebanon—the most crucial elements for establishing economic as well as political sovereignty. Referring to the Camp David Accords, Sayyed Nasrallah articulated a structuralist understanding of the relationship between normalization and neoliberalism, referring to them as an ‘imposition of a humiliating political process on the Palestinians and Arabs.’ This is what Ali Kadri describes as ‘ushering in the further pauperization of Egypt’s population that siphoned state assets for u.s. financial capital, enriching itself and the Washington-aligned comprador class’ (Kadri 2014, 84). For this reason, Sayyed Nasrallah offered Egypt and Jordan as the perfect examples for refuting Lebanese bourgeois associations of normalization with national prosperity (2023).

During the 2018 election cycle, Sayyed Nasrallah laid out the

never brazenly aggrandized his words outside the capabilities or operations of his organization. What made his speeches so captivating was his honesty, a trait that contrasted strongly with Arab leaders’ use of boastful and bombastic rhetoric, always exceeding their actual capabilities, such as Yasir Arafat (AbuKhalil 2022). His careful curation of Hezbollah’s battlefield and hybrid warfare tactics were interwoven into the threats and warnings in his speeches. Coupled with his command of language, he deployed masterful psychological warfare that harmonized surprise, field conditions, and Hezbollah’s growing capabilities, tapping into the enemy’s fears.

Western academic and bourgeois intellectual spaces continue to mischaracterize Hezbollah, alongside powers and forces of Islamic Resistance in the region, such as Iran or Palestine, as representing the intellectual pauperization of Arab resistance, inferior to the archetypal Arab left. All too often, leftist movements and interpretations of history hold a Manichean dichotomy between secularism and religion that, ironically, contributes to a more idealistic and dogmatically atheistic view on struggle. Western academia and its ideological compradors in the Arab world fail to acknowledge the Islamic Resistance on its own terms—doing so would expose contradictions in the Westernized epistemology of history and decolonization devoid of its full spiritual and dialectical dimensions. As Martyr Imad Mughnieh said, ‘The material element is a component that helps the axis, but the essence of this axis is the spirit’ (Tasnim News 2015). Deficiencies in understanding the Islamic resistance—and its main state backer, Iran—are also due to an adversarial relationship between the u.s. and Iran, the lack of translation and general access to Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Islamic Revolutionary literature. More importantly, there is a widespread hostility against anti-imperialist scholarship in Western academia, where structuralist approaches are seldom offered to understand the Islamic Republic and the regional

resistance factions, and the challenges imposed upon them by u.s. imperialism, thus contributing to a ‘poverty of analysis’ (Farnia 2023).

## Development of Institutions

Sayyed Nasrallah guided the development of social services and institutions, coupled with media, rallies, artwork, and public campaigns to promote a communal culture of resistance (Alagha 2018). In its parallels with Palestinian resistance culture, the leader deferred to the lessons of Karbala, Imam Ali, and Imam Hussein, as Ghassan Kanafani would draw upon Palestinian folklore in reviving and contextualizing historical antecedents to present-day struggles (Abdo 2014, 85). Palestinian resistance has been the core component of reviving and upholding the focus on the national question in the Arab World (Moyo 2011)—a milieu that, in drawing from their history of ‘israeli’ occupation, u.s./zionist besiegement and counter-insurgency, supplements the established history of Palestinian *adab al-muqawama* (resistance culture) (Abdo 2014). The populist developmentalism of Hezbollah cemented under Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, through credit union Qard al-Hassan that provided low-cost loans, Dar al-Hawra, an affordable community clinic providing a wide range of services, and Jihad al-Bina, which immediately and expediently provided the post-war reconstruction of homes in Dahiyeh and the South, with a speed and efficiency that baffled civil engineers. Jihad al-Bina also supports farming and beekeeping, including workshops, seed distribution, and technical assistance, embodying Hezbollah’s commitment to industry and agriculture as the labor-oriented backbone of building Lebanese society. Such projects contrast with the finance-capital-oriented economy that otherwise comprises Lebanese state institutions, rendering Lebanon unproductive, enriching only the comprador elements of Lebanese society at the expense of poorer laborers. The

former director of Jihad al-Bina discusses Lebanon’s dominant policies as ‘concentrating economic wealth and political power within a small fraction of the population at the expense of the great majority ... impoverish[ing] the poor and enrich[ing] the wealthy.’ In contrast, Jihad al-Bina strives to ‘create new outlets for local production and dignified job opportunities. Our ultimate objective is to safeguard the dignity of the working class’ (Atallah and Alleik 2008). The interconnectedness of class dignity and struggle, social and spiritual identity, and national sovereignty is a key component in the vision for Hezbollah’s social institutions under Nasrallah. This is further illustrative of the contrast Hezbollah’s of developmentalist vision to the Lebanese status quo. As a Jihad al-Bina official states,

Local politics in Lebanon are a mask for profiteering and personal interest; [Lebanon’s] politicians and leaders are businessmen and businesswomen not concerned with the public good. They want the population to engage in endless pursuits of dollars and cents, to wake up, to labor, go to the bar, to sleep, then wake up again like automatons and modern slaves. One is forbidden from having control over one’s economic destiny, political identity and the freedom to choose. (Atallah and Alleik 2008)

With such a sociopolitical vision applied to institutions, Hezbollah flourished, providing cultural institutions (Al-Maaref), hospitals, low-cost supermarkets, charities, and social support programs (al-Imdad)—the latter was formed during the civil war in order to survey and distribute assistance to the neediest families in Lebanon by an eight-man group, including Nasrallah himself (Cammatt 2014, 281). These provided critical support for its historically politically marginalized community, yet extended the availability of services across sectarian lines to meet the material needs of Lebanon’s working class, even in the absence of Hezbollah’s control over state infrastructure and institutions. On this point, academic studies often mislabel these social programs as a